The Evil and Mischief of a Fiery Spirit.

A

SERMON

Preach'd in the

PARISH CHURCHES

OF

St. *Mildred Bread-Street*

AND

St. *Matthew Fryday-Street*,

On *February* 27, 17$\frac{09}{10}$.

By *JOHN HARRIS*, D. D.

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TO THE INHABITANTS OF St. *Mildred Bread-Street*, and of St. *Matthew Fryday-Street*, and of the Parishes united to them.

GENTLEMEN,

THE particular Desire *of some of you, and the* hard Censure *of others, occasion the Publication of this plain Discourse; if there be any Expressions in it* unaccurate *or* offensive, *I am*

sorry for them; but the Design *and the* Doctrine *I* stand to, *and avow. I can't but think it very hard, both for my* Accusers, *as well as* my Self, *that they don't distinguish between* Crimes *and* Misfortunes; *and that they are as angry with me for being* Unhappy, *as they might have been for* deserving *to be so. But* some Faults *indeed I have been guilty of, and* such *they are as will never be forgiven 'till some Men have lost all their* Hopes *and* Expectations *from Abroad: I have, it seems, been preaching up* Obedience *to our Laws and Constitution, I have been inculcating a true* Christian Temper *and* Moderation, *and exhorting*

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to Love, Charity *and* Unanimity; *I have been decrying* Arbitrary Power, Implicit Obedience, *and* Implicit Faith; *and every thing I have ſaid on theſe Heads is an Affront to the* Doctor *and his Admirers!*

I think it to no purpoſe to beg Pardon for this; when theſe unhappy Stirs *and* Diſorders *are over, and Men are* cool'd *and come to* their Senſes, *there will be no Occaſion for it; and if they go on, it won't be accepted; but I muſt expect to ſhare in the common Calamity of my Country. All therefore that I ſhall now do, is to conclude with the Prayers of our Church, that God will pleaſe to* forgive our Enemies, Perſecutors

and Slanderers, and to turn their Hearts: *That he would defeat the Counsels, and bring to nought the Devices of such as have Ill-will to our* Israel, *and who turn* Religion *into* Rebellion, *and* Faith *into* Faction. *I heartily thank you for all your Favours and Civilities, and am*

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obliged

Humble Servant,

J. HARRIS.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at

St. *Mildred Bread-Street*, &c.

Luke IX. lv.

But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of Spirit you are of.

OUR Blessed Saviour was now preparing for the last Tragick Scene of His Life; and notwithstanding He well knew what would befal Him at *Jerusalem*, yet He was not terrify'd at it, but

but ſtedfaſtly ſet His Face that way; and reſolv'd to go and meet the King of Terrors there, tho' arm'd with all the dreadful Powers of Torture and Death. In the way to this City lay a Village of the *Samaritans*, whither he ſent Meſſengers, to prepare for his Reception. But theſe bigotted People, when they ſaw he was bound for *Jeruſalem*; a City whoſe Inhabitants they hated ſo far as to have no Dealings with them, tho' their Religion in the main was the ſame with their own; theſe *Samaritans*, I ſay, would give him no manner of Entertainment. So Rude a Treatment of their Maſter did mightily provoke the two Sons of *Zebedee*, *James* and *John*; whoſe fiery Temper our Lord ſeems well to have known, when he call'd them *Boanerges*, that is, Sons of Thunder: And nothing would ſerve them in this caſe but Blood and Deſtruction: And as 'tis eaſie and uſual to miſquote, or miſapply an Example, or a Precedent, to authoriſe an ill Purpoſe: So they recollected the Inſtance of *Elias*; who call'd for Fire from Heaven, and burnt up the Troops of

of his Master *Ahaziah* that were sent to take him. This cruel Method of resenting Affronts, and of treating those that they hate, our warm Brethren were mighty fond of; and as Persons of such a Temper love to be Executioners themselves, so they would not let their Master revenge his own Quarrel, but desir'd leave that *They* might call for Fire from Heaven to consume those ill-bred, ill-natur'd *Samaritans.* But our Blessed Saviour, who came not, he saith, (*v.* 56.) *to destroy mens lives, but to save them,* was of a Temper and Disposition the very Reverse of This; and therefore he turn'd about and rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what Spirit ye are of:* That is, the Heat and Fire of your Spirit and Temper makes you, as it doth all Men, ignorant and precipitant in your Judgments of things; your *fiery Zeal is without Knowledge* and Consideration: You do not think, nor attend, whither such a Spirit of Rage and Cruelty, as you are now possess'd with, will at last carry you; nor how unsuitable it is to, and inconsistent with that Dispen-

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ſation of the Goſpel which I have preach'd unto you, and am now going to ſeal with my Blood.

And indeed, this Courſe of theirs was very unlike the excellent Example he had ſhew'd them, and the Doctrine he had taught them: For he commanded them to *learn of him, who was meek and lowly: who went about doing good* both to the Souls and Bodies of Men, according to the End and Deſign of his Miſſion; for the Son of Man ſays, he came *not to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.*

I ſhall take occaſion from theſe Words, tho' *very* ſorry I am, that there is any need of it, to ſhew you that there is, even *now*, too much of this Spirit of Thunder and Lightning, this cruel perſecuting Temper amongſt Mankind; and withal, that it is very detrimental and miſchievous to the Power of Religion in our Minds, very deſtructive to all good Government, and to the Quiet and Eaſe, the Comfort and Happineſs of Mankind.

And

And in Order to do this, I shall give you a few Instances, how and after what manner this *Fiery Spirit* usually discovers its self; that so the many Evils that accompany it, may the more fully and clearly appear.

And in the first place, this Spirit appears openly and boldly in those who avow Persecution purely for the Sake of Religion; and who burn and destroy, torment and ruin those they can't answer and pervert. True indeed it is, that this is the open Profession of no other Church but that of *Rome*; but there have been many Aggregates of People, and in many Places, who have call'd themselves the Church, and the Chosen of God, that have practis'd on those they got the better on (and who before oppos'd their Power and Doctrines) much after the same manner as the Papists say Hereticks ought to be dealt with. And in plain words, *Persecution* is one and the same thing let it come whence it will, let it appear in *any Dress*, or be called by *any other Name*.

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We ſhould therefore, I think, avoid all Expreſſions or Practices that ſeem to have the leaſt Tendency that way; and ſince we pretend to diſlike *This Fiery Temper*, in thoſe who burnt our Biſhops, and other numerous Martyrs for the Truth of our Proteſtant Faith, by no means let any thing like it appear amongſt us.

Why ſhould Men charge, therefore, with *Damnable Doctrines*, and *doom to Hell and everlaſting Fire*, ſuch as differ from them only in Trifles and indifferent Things? Methinks the rude Word of an *Ignorant Separation*, might ſerve to diſtinguiſh ſome Proteſtants from others, as well as that *harder one* of a *Damnable Schiſm*: 'Tis certainly very hard and injurious to Damn all that don't think juſt as we do, about the Forms and Modes of Church Government; and who, no doubt, take themſelves to have a *Right* to interpret the Holy Scriptures, and to judge of the Practice of the Apoſtles, for themſelves; and really *this Method* of treating our Brethren,

thren, if it ſhould be carry'd on far, may in no long time be of fatal Conſequence to our Conſtitution; for it is this *Turbulent Cruel Spirit*, that occaſions all the *Schiſms* and *Factions*, and all the *Hereſies* and *Diviſions* in the Church and State.

It is not *Difference in Opinion only*, but 'tis the Difference between *this Spirit* and that of *Love and Charity*, that occaſions all the Miſchiefs and Miſeries, all the Heats and Diſturbances that we find and lament one amongſt another. And This is what St. *Paul* complains of ſo often in his Epiſtles, and ſo conſtantly cautions us againſt. And when he exhorts to *Love and Charity*, to that (*now ignominious*) Virtue of *Moderation*, to *forbearance of one another*, to a *Spirit of Meekneſs*, and to *our being like-minded one towards another*, &c. It is in order to the Ejection of this Evil Spirit, of Cruelty, Pride, Rancor and Ill-nature out of the Minds of all Men.

But

But again, tho' we don't now actually burn and destroy one another; yet,

2. There is too much of this *ignorant mischievous* Spirit appears amongst us; when we quarrel and are angry with one another, for not Thinking, Understanding and Believing after one and the same manner or way; which as it never yet was, nor is now, so it never will be, I believe, a Practical Supposition.

I don't mean this only as to the Difference of Opinion, Way of Worship, and Form of Church Government, between us and any of the Protestant Churches; but I mean it *universally*, and in the most extensive Sense, as applicable to *all Notions* and *Opinions* whatsoever; for according as the Minds, Understandings and Constitutions, according as their Capacities, Natural Tempers, Ways of Life, and Education are various; so will their Judgments and Opinions be various; and the contrary is never to be expected: Indeed, as to the

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Fundamentals of Religion, and those Points which are necessary to Salvation, we may easily, and I believe do, generally, agree; especially where we understand one another: But as to things of less Moment and Importance, as to *indifferent Things*, *Modes*, *Ceremonies*, and the *Form* and *Order*, the *Decencies* and *Decorations* of Religious Worship; and even as to Explications and Interpretations of many places in the Holy Scripture, and many less momentous Points in Divinity; certain it is, that Men never did, nor I believe, never will, or can agree unanimously about them; and we may as well hope and expect to see all *Faces*, and all *Persons*, as well as all *Minds* and *Judgments* exactly alike; our Intellectual Tastes are as various as our Bodily ones; and when we can come once to find that all the World agrees and concurs in the same Taste, Relish and Opinion as to Meat and Drink, we may expect that they are a going to do so in Notion and Judgment; but as the *former* won't be 'till there is *no Taste at all left* in Men, so the *latter* won't be 'till

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there is *no Sense* or *Understanding* left amongst us.

And no doubt, after all, there is a very great Beauty, and an Advantage to the Publick, arising from this Diversity of Judgments and Opinions about smaller Matters. Had God pleas'd, it might easily have been otherwise; he hath the Hearts and Minds of all Men, the Powers and Faculties of all Souls, entirely at his Command; and he could without any Violation to the Freedom of Human Nature have so fram'd our Minds, that we should have all thought, reason'd and determin'd in all things one way; as we generally do when we think unprejudicately on *Mathematical* and *Moral* Subjects; but there seems to be a Beauty and Advantage in *not ordering* of it so; this Diversity of Opinion and Judgment in indifferent Things, is the grand Source of Knowledge and Learning, of Diligence, Activity and Industry; it puts the Minds of Men continually on the Enquiry, and it whets our Faculties, spurs on our Endeavours, and

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every way promotes and increases useful Science. And were all Men *forced to declare* themselves (for *be so* they can't) of one Mind and Opinion; and if no one dared to express himself *per contra*; in no long time all Mankind would become as ignorant, lazy and stupid, as *Inquisitions* have render'd some part of them already.

The many Precepts therefore that we have in the New Testament, for *Unity*, *Love* and *Charity*, for our being *all of one Mind*, for *our being like-minded one towards another*; these are not design'd to render us all of the same Mind, Judgment and Opinion in Trifles and indifferent Matters; but to encourage *Unity of Affection*, of *Esteem*, of *Love*, *Charity* and *Regard*, and to prevent our Passions and irascible Affections from carrying us into such Heats, that it appears we know not what Spirit we are of; 'tis to prevent our *quarrelling* and *falling out* about such things, our *condemning* and *censuring*, our *judging* and *traducing* one another; and,

as a Consequence of all this, our dividing into *Parties* and *Factions*, and driving our Designs on with *Fury* and *Rage*, with *unmannerly Language* and *unchristian Behaviour*, and consequently shewing that we have never consider'd, or don't at all *care*, what will be the Consequence of our Pride and Fury.

And after all, if it were possible that Men might be brought to be of one Mind and Judgment, one Sentiment and Opinion, in all Points, (of Religion suppose) it must be effected, it can be brought to pass *only* by *gentle Means* and *Methods*, by *kind friendly* Converse one with another; by convincing those that differ from us, that we sincerely love them, and that we have no other Aim in it than *their Good*, and the *Peace* and *Quiet* of the Church and State; but how will this appear, if while we are about this good Work our Countenances are *elate*, our Words *bitter* as Wormwood, and our Spirit so *fiery* and violent, that they will judge we scarce know *what Spirit we are of*, nor

nor what we ſay or do our ſelves? Men will not be *driven*, *hurry'd* or *forc'd* to think as others do; and if they had not a good Opinion of the Doctrine we would inculcate into them *before*, it will not be *encreas'd* by our *Violence* and *Rancour* in advancing it; nor by their ſeeing how *ill it ſits* on us, and the *Diſorder* its Defence or Propagation put us into.

Whereas Meekneſs, Goodneſs, Kindneſs and Charity, will do *every thing* we can reaſonably expect; if our Arguments are good, and their Judgment, Senſe and Capacity clear, and their Inclinations free and unbiaſs'd, we ſhall certainly *convince* them; but if we fail in *this*, we ſhall certainly gain their *Friendſhip*, *Eſteem* and *good Opinion*, which may probably at laſt gain the End we aim at. But why ſhould we be *angry* and *quarrel* with Men for being of a different Opinion from us? If we think they are *much in the Wrong*, they are the proper Objects of our Pity and our Prayers; but ſure not of our *Rancour* and *Hatred*, of Railing and Threatning,

of *Anathema's*, Cursing and Condemnation. If Men hold any Opinions or Doctrines, that *we think* are inconsistent with the Good and Welfare of the Constitution, and if such Opinions do plainly *influence Mens Actions and Practices*, they thereby become obnoxious to the Civil Magistrate's Power, to which we should always leave them; but where no such things appear, where Mens Notions are *purely speculative*, or the Subject of them something that is in its own Nature or Use indifferent, there we may, as private Persons, very well let them alone, especially if the Government *Indulges* or *Tolerates* them; and sure we *ought* not to *envy*, *rail* at, censure or condemn *them*, or *that*, only because they don't Think and Believe just as we do. Such Persons therefore, as do openly or covertly, either in plain or express Words, or in *artful* and *double Expressions*, condemn that *Indulgence* which our Excellent Government has thought fit to allow to all such as are not profess'd Enemies to its Welfare, seem scarcely to *know what Spirit they are of*, nor

nor what Heats and Animosities, (were there *Persons* or *Characters* considerable enough) it may produce.

The Course that has been taken since the late Glorious and Happy Revolution, hath much better answer'd the Ends and Aims of these *Boanerges*, (if they are really such as they would have them appear to be; *i. e.* the Good and Encrease of the Establish'd Church) than the violent Measures which Men of such a Spirit and Temper would direct; and I should be very sorry to see even a *false* Religion receive the *Advantage* of a severe Persecution.

But again (3.) Those Persons seem also to come under the Censure and Reproof of our Blessed Lord, in the Words of the Text; as not knowing well what they are advancing, whether they are running, or *what Spirit* and Temper *they are of*; that would call for Fire to come down and consume *Mens Reasoning Faculties*, to *destroy* their very *Natures*, and to *abolish* their *Understanding*; that inculcate the Do-

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ctrine, not only of *absolute, blind, implicit Obedience*, but also of *implicit Faith*; who are continually *railing* against *Reason*, and depreciating its Use in the Judgments we are to make of Notions, Actions and Things.

Indeed, were *our Religion* like that of the Church of *Rome*; in the main, nothing but *Priestcraft*, nothing but an *insolent Usurpation* on the *common Sense* of Mankind, and the *Liberties of the Laity*, (as *some* Men seem inclined to make it) there would be a *just need* of such a Method: For a People that have made use of their Reasoning so *long*, and *so well* as we have done, can never bear the Yoak and Burthen of *such* a Religion, 'till it *becomes Criminal* to think, and a *plain Sin* to have any Understanding. But as the Doctrine and the Articles, the Discipline and the Practice of our most Excellent Church are (as I really think) *consistent with the Sacred Scriptures, conformable* to the most *Primitive Patterns* of Church Government; and such as will stand the Test of fair, free

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and impartial Reasoning; I see no Cause why we should be affraid to submit to the Determination of that universal Judge, the common Reason of Mankind; especially as to such Matters where it must be our *chief* or *only* Director.

As for Instance: My Reason can only inform me that there is a God, and acquaint me in general with his *Nature*, *Perfections* and *Attributes*: *This* Revelation can't convey to me, *First*; For *my* Reason must be the Judge of the Truth of *that Revelation*, and how it comes to me; but indeed bare Reason won't acquaint me with *all things* relating to the Divine Nature; what *Relations* or *Personalities* there are in it; it won't inform me *when* God made *This*, or any *other World*, what Methods he hath, or shall graciously contrive for the recovering a Rational Nature, when corrupted or depraved by a Fall: It could not let me into all the Business of the *Messiah*, and the Operations of the Holy Spirit; nor the Nature of the Joys of Heaven, *&c.* Most

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of these things, I say, our Reason could never have help'd us to discover without the Holy Scriptures, and consequently its *Use* is only, in these *Cases*, to enable us to judge of the *Truth* of that Revelation, the *Authority of the Canon* of Sacred Writings, and its being continu'd to us from Corruption and Interpolation.

But in all *Moral* Notions, and in *Political* Affairs; as to the Grounds and Measures of Government, and Obedience to its Laws; *there* our Reason is to be our only Guide and Director, and 'tis by its sole Touch-stone, if God's revealed Will don't interpose (and in concurrence with our Laws and Constitutions, which 'tis suppos'd were before establish'd by the same Power of Reason) that we are to try and examine *all things* relating to these Topicks. For tho' some think the Sacred Scriptures have given us Rules and Directions as to *all* these things, and others judge more rightly that they have left us nothing but the *general Duty* of Obedience to the Powers that are over us; whether of these Opinions

nions be the right, our Reason can only determine; and 'tis by this Test, together with the inward Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, that we must explain and interpret the very Sacred Writings themselves, and apply their Directions to any particular Cases that we may be concern'd in.

The most charitable Judgment therefore that we can make of those that decry the use of Reason, is *This; That they do not know what Spirit they are of*; that they have not consider'd the Consequence of such Doctrines; not see the ill use that may be made of them: For if we suppose that they do understand, and have consider'd these Things; we cannot then but think that they are going to bring us under worse than *Egyptian* Slavery and Bondage; for under a Corporal Slavery the Mind may yet be free, and a Person may have in a good measure the Satisfaction of conversing with himself; and of entertaining, and even regaling himself in the Freedom of his own Thoughts and Notions; but if his very Reasoning Faculty

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is to be crampt and fetter'd, if Notions and Opinions are to be *obtruded* upon him, which he must be forc'd to *swallow down* without *examining*; or even when his *Reason* has convinc'd him that they are *False*: This is invading the Liberty of the Human Mind universally, and will by degrees destroy all *Natural Distinctions* between *Moral Good* and *Evil*, between *Right* and *Wrong*, and will quite extinguish the Light of Conscience, that Candle of the Lord, otherwise so happily and so graciously set up in our Minds, to guide us and direct us in all useful and practical Truth: For when Men can come once to be so *stupid* as to *believe* any thing, they soon will be brought to be *so wicked* as to do any thing, that either *Superstition* shall dictate, or *Power* impose; as we see in the blind ignorant Votaries of the *Romish* Church.

And thus I think you may see, that there are *several ways* of coming under this Reproof of our Blessed Saviour, and whereby Men may shew that *they know*

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not what Spirit they are of; most of the Particulars of which may be reducible to these three Heads I have enumerated to you.

And in plain and express Words; when ever Men, with *Violence* and *Imperiousness*, with *Rudeness* and *ill Manners*, or by any *softer* or more *secret* Ways whatsoever, will excite and move the People to Tumults, Sedition and Rebellion against our Laws and Constitutions: If they start Notions to disturb, and Difficulties to perplex the Peace of our *Israel*; to blacken and render odious the late glorious Revolution, and to weaken the best Title and Right, that the best of Queens hath: If they asperse or condemn those happy Measures by which our Excellent Church and Civil Government hath been redeem'd from impending Ruin and Destruction: If they discover barbarous Ingratitude to, and abuse our best National Friends and Benefactors, and our mighty Deliverers in our greatest Distresses; if they inculcate to us unreasonable Obedience to illegal

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and arbitrary Power; if they cry up implicit Faith, and blind Submission to any Doctrine, that *some*, who may have the Assurance to call themselves the *Church*, shall impose upon us; if they discover a Tenderness for the *Romish* Church, and are fond of coming as near to it as they can possible; if they condemn that native Right of Mankind, Liberty of Conscience, exclaim against Toleration, and allow of Persecution; if they designedly sow Seeds of Sedition and Division, on purpose to inflame, make us quarrel with and destroy one another: If these, I say, or any such things as these appear in the Writings, or Discourses of any Persons amongst us; we ought to think they should be effectually *rebuked* by the Government, as well as disbelieved or disregarded by their Readers or Hearers: For it is the softest thing we can say of such Men, *That they know not what manner of Spirit and Temper they are of*: That they suggest Fears without Danger, that they have Zeal without Knowledge, and that they don't know, or have not duly consider'd the dangerous

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Consequences of such Notions and Behaviour; and therefore that they do at *least* come within the Condemnation of those Sons of Thunder in the Text; whom our Blessed Redeemer rebuked, and said, *They knew not what manner of Spirit they were of.*

I shall close all therefore with those Words of St. *Paul*, *Let all Bitterness and Wrath, Anger and Clamour be put away from us, with all Malice; and let us be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven us.*

FINIS.